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ABSTRACT

There is no "perfect" organizational pattern for an acquisition department nor for its place in the library's technical services. Whatever the areas of responsibilities assigned to the acquisition department, its organization should provide for these basic conditions and relationships: (1) distinct subunits with well-defined assignments of responsibility, (2) each staff member responsbile to only one supervisor, (3) allowance for flexibility in the use of staff, and (4) regular meetings of the subunit heads to iron out the questions which will arise regularly, with minutes circulated among all staff. Aspects of acquisitions are discussed under the following sub-titles: (1) departmental guides (a manual of procedures and a department policy statement), (2) files and records, (3) meshing of selection and processing, (4) relationship to sources of publications, (5) scientific management, (6) statistical model, and (7) personnel. To run an acquisition department at maximum effectiveness the acquisition librarian should keep up with developments of all sorts as they relate to the acquisition processes and possibilities. Suggestions of ways for doing this are presented. (NH)

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OPERATING AN EFFECTIVE ACQUISITION DEPARTMENT

by

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In discussing the operation of an effective acquisition department, I shall assume that we all start with some acquisition experience in at least one acquisition department. I shall discuss first the organization of an acquisition department in general terms, then touch on a number of aspects of acquisitions, and conclude with some exhortations on post-MLS education and professional commitment. In the interest of useful dialogue, I depend on you to question some of my statements. It would be stimulating to defend them -- or abandon them under strong attack.

ORGANIZATION

There is no "perfect" organizational pattern for an acquisition department nor for its place in the library's technical services. Historically, the great change in the place of acquisitions in the library organization was the movement during the thirties and forties to group it in a closer relationship with cataloging. Size and the need to reduce the number of units reporting to the head librarian no doubt had as much to do with the movement as did the judgment that these two strong service departments should be closely coordinated for greater efficiency and control.

Organizational variation

For information about the state of the organization of acquisitions and the related technical services in American libraries, we can refer to two studies made in the fifties and a follow-up study made ten years later. At the invitation

of the guest editor of the April 1955 issue of Library Trends, entitled "Current Acquisitions Trends in American Libraries," Felix Reichmann agreed to prepare a study on the "Management and Operation" of acquisition departments. He based his study on a questionnaire answered by thirty-one American university libraries, all research oriented. Judging from these libraries, Mr. Reichmann's conclusion was that there was "a great diversity as to the place of the [acquisition] department in the general library structure; a similar heterogeneity can be found in the definition of its function and duties." (p.462). Based on the questionnaire and his own long and lively professional involvement in acquisitions, Reichmann packs into eight pages a great deal of information about the various organization and management aspects of the acquisition function as practiced in various libraries. I shall not repeat them, but rather refer you to his article.

The other two studies, Shachtman and Dougherty, are products of committee assignments. Bella Shachtman was chairman of the Committee on Administration of the Division of Cataloging and Classification of the American Library Association for the two years from 1952 to 1954 during which the Committee queried the members of the Association of Research Libraries plus eight large public libraries about many aspects of technical services in their operations. The resulting report, based on forty-eight usable responses and detailing many differences and some similarities among the answering libraries, makes the point of diversity just as Reichmann did in the case of acquisitions alone.

In 1964, a decade after the first report was finished, the Executive Board of ALA's Resources and Technical Services Division (a successor in part to the Division of Cataloging and Classification) appointed another committee to make a follow-up study. Richard Dougherty chaired this committee, and its findings are based on sixty-three usable answers to a questionnaire.

Quoting Dougherty: "The 1955 surveyors concluded that regardless of the organizational pattern chosen by a library, it was likely that the success of an organization depended more on the quality of the people involved than on the organizational plan. The same is still true today. This survey did not produce any evidence that demonstrates the superiority of any one organizational plan." (p.65). I would hazard a guess that the form of organization of an acquisition department is a function of size and local conditions. As you know, a problem is far easier to study and a solution more likely if only one variable is involved. Two variables complicate the picture and offer a range of solutions. And what varying variables size and local conditions are!

The library's acquisition unit can properly be made up of different combinations of functions. It may include selection, searching, order, precataloging, and the handling of gifts. If the acquisition of serials is included in the department, then documents, exchanges and binding may properly be part of the unit. Acquisitions may improperly include photographic services, library mail handling, equipment and supply handling for the library, library payroll, and other nonacquisition functions. It is well to try to stay clear of these operations, usually more properly attached to the administrative office of the library.

Since there is wide variation and since we have no evidence to lead us to favor one organization over another for all libraries, it is fruitless to spend much time discussing organization charts. It will be more useful to discuss some aspects of the acquisition operation in general for application to your own particular acquisition situation.

Attributes of good organization

Whatever the areas of responsibilities assigned to the acquisition department, its organization should provide for these basic conditions and relationships:

1) Distinct subunits with well-defined assignments of responsibility.

2) Each staff member responsible to only one supervisor.

3) Allowance for flexibility in the use of staff.

4) Regular meetings of the subunit heads to iron out the questions which will arise regularly, with minutes of the meetings circulated among all staff.

Basic to the smooth functioning of the organization is adequate communication. This is probably the hardest aspect of library functioning. How difficult it is to keep in mind all who may be affected by a small change in routine! And how defenseless one is against the complaints that let one know that one has sinned. The only solution seems to be to keep the problem in mind, to keep the organizational network simple with direct channels of communication, to circulate any minutes of limited staff meetings, and to recognize that there will be failures which can only be acknowledged. Then, although the staff will not necessarily be happy, at least its unhappy members will be informed gripers with real rather than imaginary complaints.

Relationship to the other technical services

Acquisitions needs a firm technical services base, if it is to operate at an optimum level. The functions of obtaining the book and preparing it for use are so interlocked, both in bibliographic handling and control and in the mind of the library user, that the two aspects of the same purpose should be well coordinated. Acquisitions and cataloging share common goals and concerns in avoiding duplication of searching and record-making, efforts to speed processing and reduce costs, arranging the smooth flow of materials, achieving flexibility in using personnel, and the need of each to know of changed procedures in the other department.

The Dougherty report mentioned above noted a current trend toward creating formal units to be responsible for preorder and precatalog searching. This has

probably been the area of most conspicuous waste since the formation of separate acquisition and catalog departments. After the giant step of convincing acquisitions that it should record its search for bibliographic verification, there was the added hurdle of convincing the cataloger that the search should be trusted, and finally the persuasion of the acquisition-searcher that the good of the operation as a whole demanded that he record some information for the cataloger which was of no use in the order process at all. The result is that the cataloger may receive the book with a process form noting not only the established main entry but secondary entries as well.

Acquisition's relationship to cataloging and the other library units is considerably eased if there is strong leadership for the technical services, whether it is provided by a head of technical services or an associate or head librarian. It is difficult for a person closely immersed in the daily pressures and problems to see the total operation freshly and to be entirely objective about interdepartmental problems. If there is no assigned head of the technical services and if all coordinating and cooperative functions must be carried on by negotiation, much time can be wasted and solutions will sometimes leave uncomfortable psychic patches behind to cloud future negotiations. If the dissatisfied department head can localize his resentment around the person who makes the final decision, how much more quickly the wound heals! Furthermore, public service staff, the library administration, and library patrons can feel that there is a central place to go with requests and complaints, thus providing uniform response for the technical services, making sure that adjustments go to the proper point in the operation, and saving the time of those who actually do the work.

ASPECTS OF ACQUISITIONS

Departmental guides

There are two tools which are too often missing in the acquisition operation, namely, a manual of procedures and a department policy statement. The manual is obviously useful, and most acquisition librarians intend to have one if they don't as yet. It is difficult to estimate (1) how often supervisory personnel are spared the need to answer staff questions because of a manual, (2) how many shaky procedures are made firm during the process of writing a manual, (3) how much more satisfactory the training period is to the new staff member because he can go to the manual when he forgets, and (4) how large a part of the procedures are followed regularly only because they are available in writing. (Procedures are no place for creative imagination!)

An acquisition department policy statement (not to be confused with a selection or collection development policy statement) is far rarer, and indeed many department heads have not thought of developing one. The acquisition department policy statement should exist within the larger framework of a policy statement for the whole of technical services. Suggestions of policies to be included will be found in the minutes of library administrative meetings, manuals of procedures, memoranda from administrative personnel of both the library and its parent institution, staff news media, and special reports.

The process of drawing up a policy statement will serve useful functions. The exercise of differentiating among procedures (the manual), selection policies (collection development policy statement), and operational guides (department policy statement) is itself a revealing one. The resulting statement involves the library administration and other library departments in the

establishment of policies which will affect them and gains their acceptance of general policies before they are applied in specific cases; puts general work-priority decisions up to the library administration, which must be responsible for them in the long run; gives a firm basis for saying no to certain types of requests; gives a firm footing upon which to consider changes in policy; and interprets limitations in service to the user, permitting discussion of such limitations and the possibility of changing them with related resources provided.

Files and records

We assume that in the acquisition department the basic files are provided. We must control the process of a given title through the acquisition process, be able to report on demand where in the process a given title is, and retire its records when it is added to the catalog. The basic order and receipt record for each title, which may be in the department or in the public catalog, is usually supported by a variety of files: purchase orders by number or date of order and by source, desiderata files, separate order and receipt files for nonbook materials, continuation files, periodical checking files, agent address files, control files for forms and supplies, correspondence files, and completed orders. The records may allow for claims, noting agents' reports, notifying purchase recommenders, and the compiling of accession lists.

File balancing is a delicate art. With multiple order slips and with photographic processes it is easy to slip into the habit of too many files. Certainly each file added offers new service and control, and files can give a sense of security, a feeling of being ready to answer questions about what is where and where was what secured for what. Metcalf's rule, stated at the 1940 University

of Chicago Library Institute, is still valid: "A record should not be kept unless in the long run it saves more time or money than it takes to make and use." (p.90).

The balance of loose vs. tight control should be considered in relation to the times. In the days of the depression, when funds were tight and labor was cheap, tight control was rightly emphasized. Today, as funds have gradually become more plentiful and labor far more expensive, loose control is more sensible, i.e., it is cheaper to have an occasional unintentional duplication than to spend many dollars in staff salaries to maintain rigid control. Perhaps the time has come when we should experiment with "instant" cataloging, i.e., do only the precatalog searching of titles received without individual order records. Richard Dougherty and Samuel Boone suggested this in a 1966 article (LRTS Winter 1966, p.50):

> The next step logically seems to be to eliminate, in certain instances, any card at all in the process file when the book is in hand. The sole justification for preparing a card for this file is to prevent subsequent duplication. We have found that the probability of duplicating the type of material we usually receive on our blanket orders and as gifts, if the book is cataloged within four to six weeks, is very low. Only when a work's processing is temporarily deferred is there any need for placing a temporary slip in the file. Otherwise, all information collected, regardless of who collects it or when it is collected, should be recorded on some type of processing form and the work expedited through the processing department.

It takes a brave librarian to be willing to experiment with looseness. We are so accustomed to feeling guilty if we make an error or can't answer a question immediately. We should take a cue from industry and operate on the basis of an allowable level of errors in order to produce a greater amount.

At all times we should keep in mind that acquisition records are temporary controls, not permanent records. Such temporary records, even though some of them may continue to be a library's only controls during twenty years of cataloging backlogs, should be as spare as possible. It seems an obvious lesson that we should put into them as little as is necessary to effect adequate control, while putting our primary energies into the permanent record, the catalog.

Meshing of selection and processing

Whether selection is coordinated in the acquisition department or outside it, it is important that aspects of it be closely meshed with the acquisition operation. Dividends may be reaped from efforts to tighten the relationship between selection procedures and the acquisition of the items selected. If the selector can use selection tools which tend to use standardized bibliographic descriptions, the verification and checking for holdings can be done inexpensively by clerical personnel.

Those who recommend purchases should be guided to provide just as much bibliographic information as they have and to divulge the secret of their sources. Too often a cryptic order recommendation has become an intellectual game, interesting for the searcher who must verify the order but rather expensive for the library.

When an order is received for processing, it is important not only to know how much searching has already been done, but also how much of the searching can be trusted. Acquisition experience has usually not been very encouraging in this area. Bibliographically speaking, a large collection offers many places for a publication to hide, so that a very good reference librarian, who can and does find the most obscure information for a patron, may fail to find that the library has a title tucked away in an unanalyzed series or under a corporate entry. So the first rule is to promote the reporting of searching done, and the second is to know when to distrust it.

Relationship to sources of publications

A good acquisition librarian is concerned about his sources of publications. A good source is usually developed, not found ready-made. Until order and receipt procedures in libraries are a good bit more standardized than they now are, a jobber new to the library will have to be trained and revised in much the same

way a new searcher is. The initial instructions are given, the printed instructions are made available, and it is still necessary to give careful revision to the first attempts to satisfy. Visits between the librarian and the jobber are invaluable.

The secondhand market is another matter. The out-of-print but fairly available title can be pursued through advertisements, want lists, duplicates exchange lists, in the shops of specialized secondhand dealers, and by maintaining a desiderata list for checking against secondhand dealers' catalogs and offerings.

And the rare book market is still another thing. There, while fine buys can be found in dealers' catalogs, an area of collecting which includes older materials requires the sympathetic participation of a specialist bookseller or two. Such is the increasing market for titles and the decreasing availability of materials.

Exchange as a source of publications has been examined closely during the past decade. It is questionable whether a serial title which can be obtained by purchase should be sought on an exchange basis. However, titles which are available only through exchange keep the exchange unit among the library operations. For the large library with a growing Slavic collection, exchanges are important indeed, both to obtain publications which do not appear on the market or are listed in bibliographies too late to acquire and to obtain older materials from the duplicate stocks of some of the large Soviet libraries. To obtain these materials, a library will usually have to purchase current U.S. publications to barter.

Exchanges have traditionally been part of the acquisition organization. In those libraries which have set up a separate serials department some consideration should be given to attaching the exchange operations to serials. Most publications which are exchanged are serials, since negotiations for single titles do not repay the staff time involved. Since the information about serial titles--bibliographic

description, need, alternate sources, subscription cost, necessity for claiming, and patron interest--is concentrated in the serials operation, and since the titles obtained on exchange will no doubt be checked in by serials personnel, it is reasonable to gather all of these procedures and information together. It seems likely that the exchange operation offers a promising area for automation, with its mailing lists to be kept up to date, its frequent printout of addresses, and its balance of trade with each exchange partner to be recorded.

The importance of gifts as a source of materials varies greatly in the academic library, from the old private universities with their devoted alumni to the new ones which appear to be likely dustbins for crowded attics. The rule that conditions attached to a gift are hazardous is too well-known to need mention; likewise, the usefulness of an early sorting of gift collections by someone knowledgeable about the library's collecting programs. The latter can be a great storage space saver.

Scientific management

Librarians are so pushed by the flood of publications sweeping them along that they do not devote enough time to considering how to control the flood. It is often easier for the head of a department to resolve a logjam of work by mobilizing extra help or by pitching in and processing the overflow, rather than seeking the long-term solution.

Acquisitions has an ideal management situation for efficient staffing, i.e., it can provide staff to handle orders and receipts during busy periods and to do essential checking of gift and purchase collections whenever there is a lull in the work. The staff should be large enough to give good service during the peak periods, yet not too large to be gainfully employed during the slack periods. The danger is in letting an increasing work load absorb and finally swallow up the slack period. This has been happening in many libraries during the past ten years.

We are told in management courses that there are three requirements for competent administration: sound organization of personnel, simple procedures, and effective controls. As Ralph Shaw put it in the introduction to the issue of Library Trends on "Scientific Management in Libraries," which he edited, scientific management is really little more than organized common sense. All acquisition librarians have common sense, of course, but not all that they have is organized.

Fortunately, since 1966, librarians have had a textbook in this area, Dougherty and Heinritz's Scientific Management of Library Operations, published by the Scarecrow Press. As one reviewer put it:

> It codifies the essence of what has been learned about tools of analysis in business and industry and relates that knowledge to the circumstances of librarians....The directions given are clear and simple enough for any one to be able to understand them.

I strongly recommend this text for study. With its bibliographies to expand its treatment of the various facets of scientific management, it can offer the practicing librarian a good start toward an understanding of this productive approach to management.

Statistical model

I think the biggest problem in acquisitions is the growth in volume of business without parallel growth of staff. There is at work in this nation an erroneous notion, held by all except the most exceptional and enlightened library administrators, which I call the Absorption Principle.

This principle may be stated roughly as follows: "Once a library unit has been established to handle a specific function, the work load of the unit can be increased at will with no additional staff, particularly if the increases come in dabs and driblets." If you live in the usual academic library, you have probably felt the Absorption Principle at work. We must share the blame if it is respected and practiced in our libraries. If we can't give factual evidence on the work-staff

situation, we are to blame if we lack staff and cannot give reasonable service.

How do we keep our staff large enough to handle the workload? I think the answer is that we develop a body of statistical knowledge about our operation which will tell us how many work units of various sorts we can expect a given staff to do. Since we have to keep statistics, why not make them work for us? In addition to the statistics which we keep regularly, we need to gather some on a sampling basis to give us the total picture of our work potential.

First, make your operation as efficient as possible. Then, find out what your staff can accomplish per man-hour of such activities as searching order recommendations, unpacking books and matching with invoices, matching incoming titles with order slips, searching secondhand catalog items, and so on through the list of procedures which are commonplace in the acquisition operation.

Next, figure your annual productive hours of work by allowing for vacations, holidays, sick leave, breaks, and periods of vacancies. Pull the whole together into a statistical model of what your staff can accomplish in a given period of time and involve the library administration and the public services in deciding priorities, in selecting the units to be ordered and processed.

Consider the interest which a statistical report of this kind will arouse compared to some annual reports which the heads of libraries customarily receive, detailing such figures as the number of orders placed during the year, the number of letters written, and so on. I suspect that the administrator, on reading the latter type of figures, instead of being impressed by the amount of work accomplished is wondering whether the time spent gathering them couldn't have been more productively used.

Too often in considering whether to accept a gift collection the choice is debated as yes/no instead of either/or, that is, shall we undertake to process this gift collection of 10,000 volumes or shall we process 10,000 selected volumes?

The statistical model can focus the decision on the realistic consideration of what is more important to accomplish, serving as a sort of time budget to be administered in much the same way as the book budget.

There are other uses for a statistical picture of staff potential. It can lead toward a balanced technical services operation in which staff is deployed to acquire and catalog approximately the same number of bibliographic units each year instead of falling into the usual pitfall of developing expensive backlogs. It can expedite studies of the effectiveness of proposed new methods of handling the work. It can aid in making decisions on whether it would pay to enter into blanket orders and approval plans, apply automated procedures, or enter into cooperative processing agreements. It can furnish answers to questions about the number of employees required to perform a given increase in the work load. It can translate time units into costs. Indeed, it can aid in all phases of efficient planning and scheduling of work. It can inform the worker what a reasonable work output is and give the supervisor standards based on more than intuition.

A strong buttress for such a statistical model would be a dictionary of performance norms. If work units could be defined and standardized, and performance norms established for various work methods for each work unit, then the individual library could compare its work production with the norms and thus both evaluate its procedures and more readily convince its administration of the validity of its statistical picture.

Personnel

Personnel in all this can be a great strength or an appalling weakness. Changes made without staff understanding are apt to be misunderstood at best or resented at worst. Since a well-run department tends to have changes of one sort or another coming along pretty continuously, it is apparent that staff attitudes toward them should be given careful consideration.

Perhaps the most important rule is to engage the relevant staff in activities leading up to a change. One should seek the advice of those nearest a specific operation, those who actually carry out the procedures. You may recall that last February a bill was introduced in the New York legislature to change the state abortion law. The experts called in to testify were fourteen men and a nun. I don't know who selected the experts or why the bill, which offered much-needed reforms, was defeated, but I would have recommended a different lineup of witnesses. Although the outside expert can be useful, both because of his experience and because of his lack of involvement, the staff has inside knowledge for which there is no substitute.

In the continuous rush to keep the operation afloat, the acquisition librarian may have little time and energy to give to reviewing procedures unless an emergency develops. One prod toward this essential activity is the habit of reviewing each form as the supply needs replenishment. The staff which uses the form and lives with the results of its use (e.g., the order form) should be given an opportunity to suggest changes in it. Not only will some knowledgeable suggestions be obtained thus, but staff will gain a proprietary interest in making the results of their suggestions work on the job. A secondary value in form review is the chance for administrators to get to know staff better by working closely with them. Such reviews usually lead to rethinking the procedures related to the form, the files in which copies are held, and the physical layout of the work related to their use.

It is important,too,to emphasize that changes are intended to make jobs easier, more efficient, and more effective, not efforts to get the staff to work harder. The goal is the production of more and better units with less expenditure of time and energy. In the same way performance norms are not sweatshop devices, but rather work planning tools which offer the added advantage of permitting staff to know how they measure up to the average and what they might be expected to accomplish.

I see the current movement toward establishing a subprofessional classification in the library as a good thing. It enables libraries to pay a better salary to the college graduate with a language or two as compared to the new high school graduate with typing skill. The new rank, called a library technician or technical assistant, corresponds to the laboratory assistant in the hospital. In acquisitions he is particularly useful in the searching routines, having a broad enough background to learn the tools and to use them competently. In efforts to reduce the routine work for the professional librarian, both clerks and college students have been used for searching. It has been apparent to many of us that the student was a better searcher than the clerk. This new category enables us to have the best of both worlds--the greater knowledge of the student and the continuity and fulltime availability of the clerk. In the older libraries, as new staff is needed, the new positions should usually be in the clerical ranks with consequent more purely professional assignments for the librarians.

There is one conspicuous area in which we fail in acquisitions to train our staffs as well as we should. There has been too little formal communication of the rules used in cataloging, filing, and deciding upon inclusions in the card catalog. Both old and new searchers have not understood the principles under which main entries are established, and the introduction of the new Anglo-American rules has compounded the difficulties. With the catalog department's cooperation it should be possible to make a short (one page?) résumé of the underlying principles and the rules and present it to the searchers. The effort would pay off, especially for the catalogers who use the searchers' product.

SHARPENING ONE'S SKILLS

To run an acquisition department at maximum effectiveness the acquisition librarian should keep up with developments of all sorts as they relate to the acquisition processes and possibilities. First of all, he should make every effort

to see the current literature which impinges on acquisitions. Those who are not near a library school are at a disadvantage and should plan to visit a library science library periodically and there browse as well as search for information on specific problems. The academic acquisition librarian should keep up with his specialist journals, Library Resources and Technical Services with its annual survey of acquisition activities and College and Research Libraries. Regular scanning of the following journals also pays off:

Antiquarian Bookman
Publishers' Weekly
Library of Congress Information Bulletin
UNESCO Bulletin for Libraries
Library Journal
Journal of Library Automation

I find the Special Libraries Association publication, Special Libraries, rewarding to see. It seems more concerned with costs and efficient management than other library association organs.

Besides regular reading beats, the acquisition librarian will find it stimulating to make exploratory trips in the literature of such areas as management, personnel, and automation. If he can loosen up his thinking and attitudes during such trips, he can sometimes find useful applications for home problems. There is a kind of relaxation in the complete unawareness of the library world on the part of the authors of such treatises. Consider,for example,a book on The Principles of Management by Koontz and O'Donnell. It lists the five managerial functions as planning, organizing, staffing, directing, and controlling. The authors state that they believe that "these five functions are the same for every manager in all kinds of enterprise and at all levels. The president of a large American corporation is a manager. His Holiness the Pope also manages." (p.2). Now, if you can fit yourself somewhere in that range of managers, you may find some interesting suggestions for your own operation.

Almost as unbiased an approach is found in a Bachelor of Science thesis accepted

at M.I.T. in 1968, Robert Shishko's An Application of Systematic Analysis to the M.I.T. Libraries. Mr. Shishko's conclusions and recommendations are both fun and stimulating to read. Consider, for example, this bland statement:

> Because the processing costs of journals and serials consist mainly of handling rather than cataloging, a saving of about $20 per journal could be realized if these journals were purchased on commercially produced microfilm.
>
> This saving would be accompanied by a loss in benefits because microfilm can only be purchased at the end of the year. Alternatively, more journals than the M.I.T. Library currently receives could be purchased at the current budget level if the microfilm version were specified. (p.60).
>
> Another interesting alternative would be "fast ordering." For about $20,000 per year, all items necessary for reserve or specifically requested by students or faculty could be ordered by long-distance telephone calls, telegrams, etc., and received by special delivery mail. (p.61).

I don't mean to poke fun at Mr. Shishko's study. It has some interesting methods and ideas in it. The great thing which it and Koontz can do is to shake loose our thinking and help us see things freshly.

The Acquisitions Section of ALA offers a national forum where acquisition librarians can discuss common concerns, share experiences, and take cooperative action to solve problems. Active participation in professional affairs can show profit on practical levels in day-to-day activities. It can also make the job more rewarding for the individual.

Moving into professional communication is easy to do if one is interested. Suppose that you have a specific problem and search the literature to see how it has been solved by other libraries. Often you will find that the literature has little to offer. Next, you may write to several librarians to find out what their experience has been, and you might plan from the beginning (i.e., ask permission when you write) to share the results with others, even if the total result warrants only a letter to the editor rather than a formal article.

A further and more useful step is to notify the Acquisitions Section of the problem and the lack of aid, writing either to the Section Chairman or to the relevant

committee chairman, and propose that something be done about it. Quite a goodly proportion of ALA sectional committees are looking for useful activities, and you will often find yourself swept up in the action.

There is a great deal still to be accomplished for acquisitions by association activity. The large resource problems tend to become the concern of the head librarians and to be acted upon by the Association of Research Libraries, since the power to make cooperative commitments for libraries lies there. But the acquisition librarian is master of the problems of routine and procedure, and there are needs in those areas such as standardized forms and performance norms.

One of the most complex areas of administration is that of human relations. Perhaps that's why it is so rewarding to handle difficult problems in that area and solve them. The heavy and increasing work loads in the technical services and the developing backlogs have combined to give the acquisition librarian guilt feelings about the work not done, the orders not yet placed, the claims not made, the books on hand but not processed. In an article entitled "The Administrator Looks at Technical Processing," Norman Kilpatrick noted that one of the things which the administrator expects of the technical services professional staff is the ability to discuss problems objectively without feeling on the defensive. That's harder than it sounds, and it's the lack of this ability, I suspect, which makes many suggestions wind up in the reject pile and leaves the head librarian unconvinced of staff needs.

For illumination of the problem of working with others, I have found it rewarding to read Bundy's article on "Conflict in Libraries." It is useful if it implants in your mind the one idea: "The outcome of conflict is heavily structured in favor of the status quo." That says to me that one should give full consideration to the suggestions of his staff. It may become increasingly a bore to listen to each new generation of library school graduates, as they speak too soon and too critically of what they see without knowing the whole.

I'm reminded of a sociology librarian who ordered for the general stacks a book rich in interesting sex practices. As a young acquisition assistant I was sent to suggest to her that the book should either be in her well-guarded collection or in the locked stacks, since it might otherwise be stolen. Already a sweet old lady at the age of fifty, she shook her head sadly and asked, "Are they still doing that?" Yes, the new generation is interested in the same old subject, and each generation of library school graduates will have some old suggestions. But they will also have some new ones, so a considered response will not only help lay the foundation for a good librarian, but may also lead to a useful new procedure.

I would like to end with Felix Reichmann's envoy to his 1955 article which I mentioned above. Felix is the sort of bookman we like to think all acquisition librarians should be.

> Acquisition work has many facets. It needs knowledge of books and familiarity with the book trade, it demands broad vision and respect for the minute detail, it requires understanding of the scholar's problems and of the needs of the accountant, but most of all it calls for an outgoing personality who loves both books and people, loves them in their glory and their foibles. No one will meet all the qualifications of an ideal acquisitions librarian, but everyone takes pride that he works for the library's most important objective, the development of its book collection. (p.469)

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